

Mainstream *baptists for life and growth*

Corners, Slides & Troughs From the Editor

Recently, the Baptist Times carried the front page headline "We've turned the corner" with subsidiary comments including "Sixty year slide seems to be over" and "probably reached the bottom of the trough". This is certainly encouraging news and I am grateful to God for the 2000 increase in membership of the Union in 1984. Let us all hope that the 1985 figures are a much greater improvement given all the activity of Mission England etc.

However, I have a sobering thought. According to my calculations it took an average of twenty baptists one year to yield one baptism. So much for J.G. Oncken's "Every Baptist a missionary"! I, for one, would be glad to see the day when our churches see baptisms running at 10% of membership totals (i.e. twice the present number). If half the denomination can see five or less baptisms each year, and the larger half can see ten, twenty... fifty baptisms, then we could realise this aim. Is that really beyond our reach?

Tom Rogers' article gives some helpful pointers in the right direction which surely most of our churches can act upon immediately. He, and his colleagues at Church House (especially the HMF office), deserve our full support and co-operation. Graham Warner's article sets before us the challenge of inner-city evangelism and presents us with a church-planting strategy which some of our more adventurous churches could do well to consider. Already several baptist churches in SE London are involved with Icthus in their vision. You don't have to be a large church to be able to start another congregation. It can be done!

In my own church in Hackney we believe that the Lord has shown us that if we want to see the building full on Sundays we need to see the building

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full during the week. Let's put our resources into mission and if we haven't a building suitable for community use, let's use our homes and/or rent other premises.

Why not 15,000 baptisms per year? This isn't talk about numbers for the sake of numbers. We live in a society that is crying out for committed Christians in all walks of life. The need of our society demands a vigorous response from the Church. We, as Baptists, with our evangelistic outlook must rise to meet the challenge of the hour. God help us, if we can't!

Terry Griffith.

What I wish Deacons knew about Evangelism



I am convinced that the editor is hell-bent on making me as unpopular with deacons in our Churches as he possibly can! Fancy giving me a title such as this! The truth is, however, that there are many things I wish deacons knew about evangelism but sadly they often don't.

Much has been written recently about the function of the deacon and it has to be said that the biblical basis for the office is very broad and can be interpreted in a variety of complementary ways. But the invitation is to share what I wish deacons knew about evangelism, so let me put my head in a noose and suggest four areas that might well form the basis of a discussion at your next deacons' meeting - or even Church meeting if you're brave!

1. The Deacon is an appointed leader in God's missionary society

I wish, therefore, that every deacon was aware of the fact that the primary function of the People of God whom they dare to lead is that of mission.

Whatever theological or biblical picture you care to paint of the Church it must have as a fundamental element within it the fact that it is called and commissioned to go into all the world to evangelise. Whether through proclamation, identification with the needs of the world, establishing righteousness and justice, or whatever - the is to evangelise.

It follows, then, that each local manifestation of the Body of Christ is expected by God to fulfil that commission within the locality of its existence - i.e., to be God's missionary society in their own neighbourhood. Obviously, as it seeks to relate to God our Creator and Saviour, the Church will naturally find itself worshipping Him. Equally, as it sees the needs of God's children it will reflect the heart of God and find itself sharing all it has with those around. But also, as it is obedient to the urging of His Spirit, it will find itself bursting forth into a world to tell in simple, straight forward terms what God in Christ has done. There were 120 people in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost. Obviously, they were full of adoration, love and worship towards the Lord who was so real to them. They were acutely aware of one another's needs and of the needs of those around, and lost no time at all in seeking to meet those needs. But when the Spirit came the first and foremost thing that mattered was to go out and share the Good News - and the leaders led the Church forth.

I wish every deacon was aware of that priority. Not that every deacon should be an evangelist, or even be able to go out visiting - but surely every deacon should have right at the front of his spiritual consciousness the awareness that this is the purpose of the Church and, therefore, every gift that he or she has should be used to enable the Church to fulfil this Divinely given purpose.

The treasurer's main concern must surely be to see that money is available for local outreach, that evangelism is a major (if not **THE** major) item on the budget, and if money is not being used to this end then the auditors ought to ask "Why"? The Church secretary should ensure that evangelism is on every deacons' and church meeting agenda - encouraging those who have something to report and share, stimulating those who are shy or withdrawn, enabling the grass roots to share thoughts and vision as to how, and what, and where we can best reach those around us. The whole diaconate should be concerned about, if not involved in, the training and equipping of the membership to share the Gospel everywhere.

I wish that every deacon was aware that he/she is a leader in God's missionary society.

2. The Deacon is an instrument of God's love

I doubt if many deacons would disagree with that. But I wish that every deacon's heart throbbed with the compassion of Christ when He looked upon the multitudes.

When the Lord saw the crowds on 'the other side of the Jordan', He felt compassion for them, and immediately began to teach them the Word of God; later, when they were hungry, the disciples were challenged to feed them. But supremely He was sharing with them the truth of the Gospel - the fact that 'God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life'. It is this eternal dimension of life that runs through every page of Scripture that the Church is custodian of, not to guard, but to give. And this eternal gift of grace springs from the very heart of the Father.

I wish that every deacon felt and reflected that love and through it felt the compulsion to lead God's people out to share His love.

It might be an over-simplification to say that the battle for our redemption, the battle that was manifested on the cross and in the resurrection was really won in the Garden. But I'm sure you will know what I mean when I say that our Lord's submission to the Father in the words 'not what I want but what You want' was really the key to the victory. Surely, those words were spoken and that submission made, not because Jesus had been crushed into giving in, not out of fear of the Father's wrath, not out of blind obedience - but out of an obedience born of love. Jesus loved the Father, but His heart also throbbed with the same beat as that of the Father - i.e. Jesus loves you and me and that is why He died for us.

I wish every deacon would open his/her heart to that same love and so be willing to take up his/her cross and follow Jesus - into the pubs, the highways, the homes, the factories, into the places where people are.

3. The Deacon is a servant

I wish every deacon would seek only to serve and not to rule.

The word deacon means 'servant', but today it is more often interpreted as 'ruler' or 'leader'. I have heard diaconates being described as 'The Board of Directors' and many behave in just that way. I know diaconates who love to describe themselves as 'The leadership of the church'. Those phrases reflect a haughtiness and even an arrogance that is a denial of the office.

Mind you, I have to admit to a dilemma here. The gifted people within the membership of the church are likely to be those who are recognised and accordingly rewarded in the secular world. So the company director who is converted and filled with God's Spirit is likely to find himself appointed by the Church to lead. The manager or company secretary is likely to find himself/herself called upon to exercise this gift within the Body of Christ. So it is inevitable that those who exercise roles of leadership in the secular world will often be asked to do the same in the Church, and because of this they face a dilemma and a task more difficult than most.

Our Lord is one who 'did not count equality with God a thing to be hung onto, but humbled Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant.....' So the company director who is appointed by God's people to the office of deacon must 'have this mind which was also in Christ Jesus....' He is appointed not to rule, but to lead in love as a humble servant, not to direct from the lofty position of 'leadership' but to guide as a slave of his Master; not to dictate policies and expect others to fulfil his will, but to 'do the will of the Father' himself and simply look to others to follow (without the threat of resignation if they don't!! Do you recall what the Lord said to those who were to become the leaders of His Church? - Matt. 20: 25-26) ' You know that the rulers of the heathen have power over people, the leaders have complete authority. This, however, is not the way it shall be among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest.....'

I wish every deacon would seek to serve as a true servant of Christ, for if he or she did I have no doubt that the Lord's commission would sing loudly in their ears!

4. The Deacon is one who supports and enables the work of Christ

There can be a tendency sometimes for a diaconate to take the attitude that the minister is accountable to them, they are the bosses and take the line 'You'll do as you're told, laddie!' This is especially so with older, experienced diaconates when involved with younger men - they pay the piper, so they call the tune. But the more spiritually aware of our deacons will recognise that whilst they may have a great deal of experience and maturity in church matters, the Lord has not given them that to enable them to lord it over His servants to function and work.

I count it as a supreme privilege to have had diaconates that have done just that. Diaconates where every deacon without exception has openly held me before the Lord before I dare enter the pulpit. Diaconates that have come weekly before breakfast to share with me in prayer concerning pastoral matters. Diaconates that have been a tower of inspiration, a strength upon which I could lean with confidence. But deacons are not always like that! Some deacons are, alas, selfish and want only that the minister should pray for them and are in no way prepared to reciprocate in any kind of deep or regular way. Even on a Sunday before the minister/elder is sent forth to be the instrument of God's Word, there is sometimes only the mandatory prayer by one notified deacon. There is no sense in which the minister can feel the combined, united, sustained spiritual support from God's called and chosen servants.

I wish, therefore, that every deacon would be a 'comforter', a 'strengthenener and supporter' to the one God calls to serve with them.

You see, if the Church is to evangelise, then the minister must be in the forefront. He is a front-line captain and must lead his troops out on to the field. Or, to change the metaphor, he must show the way and exercise the power of the Spirit in evangelism. He may not be an evangelist as such but he must lead the Church in witness and he must certainly encourage and stimulate those who do have the gift of evangelism. When the enthusiasm wanes he must be there to encourage. When they are attacked and dispirited he must be there to defend and uphold. He is Christ's enabler - but who enables, supports, encourages him? Why those whom God has called and appointed to serve - the deacons!

I wish, then, that every deacon would be prepared to fulfil his/her ministry and so enable both the minister and members to fulfil theirs.

Tom Rogers, Secretary for Evangelism,
The Baptist Union.

Ichthus Christian Fellowship



In 1974 a small group of fifteen Christians were led by the Lord to plant a church in South East London, with the specific objective of using it as a base for evangelising the whole area. That little group, under the leadership of Roger Forster, has grown to approximately 1,300 people over the past eleven years.

Encouraged by the success of that first congregation, we have branched out all over South East London with the Gospel, and have since planted sixteen more congregations, penetrating into the inner city. Those sixteen congregations make up Ichthus Christian Fellowship today, but we have a vision of planting 60 more by the year 1993.

We have been particularly interested in planting 'congregations' in the large unevangelised estates of South East London (85% of our inner city areas are as yet unreached by the church). Estates such as the Gloucester Grove Estate' described in Time Out magazine, October 1985, as the estate 'whose endless urine-sprayed, garbage-strewn, fire-singed corridors are the stuff of nightmares', obviously presenting a particular challenge to the Gospel. So too the neighbouring 'North Peckham Estate' whose crime rate featured highly in the recent television documentary 'London-City of Fear'. Both places have been declared 'no go areas'. Tradesmen refuse to enter in; residents are afraid to venture out. We have come across elderly people whose homes have become 'prisons of fear'. Afraid to go out in case they get 'mugged', or if they venture out, afraid to go home in case they have been broken into. We go into these areas, where even the postmen refuse to deliver, to share the Good News that is in Jesus - that despite the seeming hopelessness of much around there is a message of hope. Even though the areas last year were pronounced as having the highest jobless concentration in London, Jesus has relevant answers through His Church.

It was to address the job situation that we started our 'Vineyard Programme', which is intended for those who have been unemployed for some time. It is an employment scheme seeking to do more than just teaching a work skill. It gives training in basic life skills such as money management, social skills such as communication and relationships, and practical skills such as cooking, home maintenance etc. This short, voluntary course aims to

rebuild life in the community, particularly to teach responsibility within the family. It is always a particular encouragement to see families being put back together again in a society where marriage is falling apart. Some of the estates we work on have as high as 90% broken families, but even where reconciliation is impossible it is good to welcome people into the Christian family.

As a church we try to express family life on three different levels. Firstly, getting the whole family together, that is, all the congregations that we have planted, to large 'Celebration' meetings, for mutual support and encouragement as well as inspiration and envisioning to press on with the task of reaching the darkest areas of South East London. Each Sunday evening, and every fourth Saturday in the month, we gather for worship and prophetic teaching from the Word in a large school hall in Sydenham. It is in this atmosphere of praise and proclamation, that people are given the opportunity to come forward for personal ministry. It is here that the Lord has dealt with, and healed, so much of the personal hurts inflicted by inner city life.

Secondly and equally important as the large celebrations, are the small 'Cell' group. The Fellowship meets at present in 60 different housegroups. These are pastoral units to care for the individual's needs and also to seek out, develop and use spiritual gifts in the context of developing friendships in the Body of Christ. To discover and train leadership potential is also essential in a rapidly growing church. Housegroup leaders take on the responsibility of seeking to bring everybody in their care to spiritual maturity in Christ (Col. 1:28). Besides fellowship and fun events within the housegroups, leaders encourage their members to give or receive a 'one-to-one', when a young Christian can share, pray and study the Word with a more mature Christian allowing far more personal issues to be dealt with then can be discussed in even the small group context. New Christians are also encouraged to join 'Startrite' classes, which are a series of simple Bible studies aimed at giving a thorough understanding of all the basic doctrines of our faith. Having gone through this series of studies, they may want to join a 'FISH' group (Further Into Spiritual Health), for more in depth Bible Study. The over-riding aim of these groups, in fact the bottom line of all that we do, whether worship, teaching or pastoral care, is to equip men and women for the task of winning the world for Jesus.

This is the particular forte of the third area - the 'Congregation'. These are the evangelistic arms of the Fellowship, reaching right into the heart of the local estates. Each Congregation prays, plans and strategizes towards winning its area for Jesus, often fasting and waiting to receive supernatural keys to unlock each community and to lock up the evil power of satanic principalities that for too long have run riot through our inner city. However, this waiting on God is always accompanied by committed action.

Saturation evangelism is a way of life for those of us in Ichthus. It is mission all the year round. Jesus did not say 'pray for the Harvest to come', because it is always there, but pray for labourers' to go in to reap it. As God's labourers' we are often on the High streets on Saturday mornings or perhaps singing on the march through residential estates, stopping every now and then to proclaim a message from God to the people; a terrific opportunity to speak to hundreds of homes, to whole families, with a short, succinct message over the microphone. You will also find us in the pubs, sometimes even hiring a pub for the evening, to specifically reach out to men in our society communicating in an environment where they can feel at home. Or early in the morning you may find us outside the railway stations handing out literature to the commuters - good news to read instead of bad! Or perhaps it is through our extensive door to door programme that you might hear of our 'Jesus Action' scheme; - 'Is there anything we as a Church can

do for you?' It is the 'no strings attached' service that Jesus gave everywhere He went. We have become known as a caring Church because we have seen our commitment to loving service as extending to the unconverted. For the same reason we would encourage everyone involved in Ichthus to build real friendships with non-Christians; it was so much part of Jesus' strategy that it earned him the nick-name 'Friend of Sinners'.

Surveys in this country have shown 49.7% of those converted are reached through personal relationships. We were excited and challenged to think a couple of years ago that if everyone in Ichthus, about four hundred strong then, seeks to win just one person to Christ each year and then teaches them to do the same, we would in just 14 years win 8 million people for Christ! Continue at that slow rate of one convert each, each year, we would win the world's population in one generation!

Talking of reaching the world, we have always tried to keep in mind a wider perspective than just South East London; that is why, within the context of our team ministry, we seek to serve the Body of Christ nationwide and worldwide, irrespective of denomination. A fair amount of our time is taken up with preaching and holding evangelistic missions in other churches, universities and colleges. This has included four university missions, a polytechnic and a city wide campaign over the past few weeks.

We also support, to varying degrees, some 40 workers overseas working with various mission agencies. About three quarters of those we support are in full-time Christian work, the others involved with secular work such as medicine or engineering, but all seeking to extend the kingdom of Jesus. In April this year we wend out our next missionary couple, this time to Thailand. Regular prayer groups gather to pray for these as well as the various countries and continents they seek to serve. We have developed a particular burden for the muslim world which is leading us into the adventurous project of church-planting in the Near East hopefully by the end of this year. We have also been developing contacts with churches in France with the desire of placing church-planting teams there over the next few months.

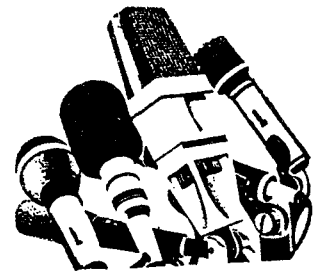
To keep the push going both at home and abroad we see the training of workers to be of paramount importance. Since 1982 we have run a full-time training scheme called 'Network'. This is a year's 'on-the-job' Bible School, carried out in the context of a local Church, for mature Christians with a clear call into Christian work. It has been limited in size, approximately 30, to enable seminars, personal tutoring and a sense of group identity to be maintained. Each 'Networker' is given a Church-planting assignment, to develop his spiritual gifting and initiative, learning leadership by the responsibility of leading. Some of those that have been through the programme now work alongside the 'Ministry Team' as full-time workers, extending and consolidating the Church planting work here in London. We also run a short term Bible School for four weeks each July, known as the 'Summer Project' which is again an intensive course of lectures and evangelistic experience aimed at sharing our vision and equipping men and women for the task of evangelising the world in our generation.

Space does not permit me to tell the hundreds of personal testimonies to the saving power of Jesus, of the salvaging of men and women, body, soul and spirit, some of them so dramatically from the enemy's kingdom, to serve in the Kingdom of Jesus, to whom we give all the glory. The over-riding theme of our motivation comes out in that great moravian missionary cry - "That the Lamb that was slain might receive the reward of His suffering".....

Graham Warner, Camberwell.

Interview with David Coffey

Build that Bridge



As all of you will know by now, David Coffey, Mainstream's former Secretary, becomes the B.U. President at the Assembly in April. Recently, I went to see David, who lives just 25 miles up the coast from us, and asked him all sorts of questions about his Presidential Year.

First, we talked of his theme, "Build that Bridge" and what had prompted him to consider it. David said, "I am very conscious of the ferment that has been taking place within British Churches over the past few years." He identifies three aspects of Church life in which tensions have been produced, thereby demonstrating his good Spurgeonian background! The first is in the LOCAL CHURCH where renewal is taking place. "We cannot expect renewal without tears, but we can have change without needless divisions." He expressed concern that renewal was not always being achieved whilst retaining the integrity of the local Church. The second area concerns the BAPTIST FAMILY of Churches affiliated to the B.U. "There seems to have been more polarisation in backgrounds and traditions. The fact that these streams of our expressed faith are not meeting and talking may eventually mean that attitudes harden, differences are over-stressed and the barriers become harder to break down". The third area of David's concern is for the meeting of evangelical leaders in the nation. "I want to try to encourage leaders from the historic denominations and the newer, emerging Restoration churches to talk together and meet each other."

As to the reason for building bridges, David states his evangelical position unequivocally. "At the heart of the gospel there is reconciliation - a reconciliation between God and men that makes the people of God one. The needs of the world today demand that there be far more joint action between those who have a common understanding of the gospel. We are far more fragmented than we need be and, because of it, we have lost the personal enrichment that comes from a diversity of fellowship."

Then I asked David to elaborate on what he sees as the background to the present ferment. "Some of it," he said, "is due to rising confidence and a new level of faith; some to a new commitment to evangelism and social action; and some to an emphasis on personal and corporate renewal in all areas of Church life."

The ferment has arisen through the growth of our Churches and merely represent the growing pains. But numerical and spiritual growth also brings tensions. They are the tensions of life and, if handled wisely, may be immensely fruitful in the life of the Church. But there have been some negative results from these rapid changes. "There are people who take up the latest 'spiritual bandwagon' uncritically; people who are not sufficiently aware of the need for a thorough-going Biblical basis for what they experience; people who abuse spiritual power and authority within a fellowship in order to accomplish the vision for which they are going." All these are identified as difficulties many ministers and churches have had to face.

In spite of the tensions, divisions, hurts and sadness that have been caused, sometimes running deep, David remains confident and hopeful for better things to come in the future. "Yes, I am confident that just as people cause conflicts, people can also solve conflicts. You can't have Church life without ANY conflict, but all too often we have conflict without the accompanying reconciliation. You have to be optimistic that with the right structures, and with leaders at local and national level who are willing to meet and talk, any conflict can be resolved."

As we continue our conversation I sense David's optimism which flows into everything he says. Sitting in David's study surrounded by the colourful bindings of twenty years of avid book reading, we move on to what the next ten years may hold for Baptists. The events that prompted the encouraging report, "SIGNS OF HOPE", have developed into a sustained increase in membership across the country. David agrees with Bernard Green that "we have seen a turning point in our denomination."

"I am encouraged by the quality of our leaders: we now have the strongest team in Church House for many years. But I know our younger leaders are also of high calibre and they will be the ones taking up key positions at Union, Association and College level soon. I hope we will give these younger people with outstanding gifts the opportunity to express themselves. It would often appear easier for young men and women to reach positions of leadership in the Para-church Movement than in the Historic Denominations. Shame on us for that."

Another evidence of hope and confidence for the future is the increasing commitment of those firmly within the evangelical constituency to working within the system and structures of the Union as they stand. Says David, "For many years I have called for us to get more involved, roll up our sleeves and be prepared to serve, listen and make our contribution. We have to play our part and work hard to give a breadth to Association and Union life. Whilst recognising there may be some who may wish to serve on the fringes of Baptist life, it is equally a valid calling to serve at the centre. I hope all the readers of Mainstream's Newsletter will take this call to heart."

My interest quickened further when David spoke of his two trips abroad during the Presidential Year. "At the end of May I have the privilege of going to the USSR as co-leader, with the Archbishop of York, of a delegation from the British Council of Churches. The delegation will be formed of people from all the historic denominations, the Salvation Army, the Quakers and the Black Pentecostals. My background has not given me much international experience or contact with the BCC, so I am particularly delighted to have this opportunity to illustrate my theme of Bridge Building."

"My other visit to Zaire under the auspices of the BMS also gives me great pleasure. It is an opportunity to see the increasing co-operation between the BMS and the Union advanced still further. I am delighted to be able to go to Africa, a continent I have never visited, but which I believe will feature so prominently in the future of the world Church."

I turned to the question of what areas of Baptist life he would most like to be affected by his Presidential Year. Naturally, his first remark concerned the need to observe and listen to all the people he will meet in the course of the year. But then he went on to talk of things he is planning. "I am holding what I call a 'President's Consultation' to which I have invited people who represent different traditions within our denomination. We will get together for two days, read papers, listen to each other, talk, share and pray together. I am not so naive as to expect total unity, but I do hope everyone will gain a clearer understanding of where others stand and why. The size of our family means that we have many things to gain from one another". David speaks of two principles under which we should operate: firstly, "we should be less defensive about our traditions and more critical of our innovations". And the second is that "insights given to part of the Baptist family should be shared with the whole family". All this means there has to be more active sharing and dialogue between Baptists.

"A second contribution I would like to make is to see Baptists broaden their view of ecumenical relationships. We have had a number of people making a significant contribution to fostering closer inter-church relationships, not least, our General Secretaries and their service to the WCC and BCC. But I would like to see the Union taking bold initiatives in relating to the independent evangelical groups such as the black Churches, and some sections of the House Church Movement. Many of these are open and would like a closer relationship with the Historic Denominations. Let us hold out a hand of fellowship".

Then David spoke of the "spirituality" of the people in our Churches and hopes that we wont just grow in activity and organisation but in the depth of our relationship with God. To hear again William Carey's call to prayer, reiterated by Reg Harvey and Bernard Green two years ago, is essential for the continued growth of our Churches because there are things that "only God can do". "I also want to be an ambassador for the many people who work behind the scenes. During my term as Vice President I have had deeper insights into the workings of Church House and the Baptist Union. What I have seen has increased my confidence and I want to act as a spokesman for the many good things and much hard work that is being done".

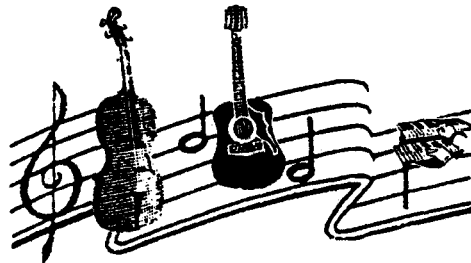
Finally, I turned to lighter things, asking David how he would cope with the rigerous schedules imposed upon him for the coming year. "I have been encouraged to 'pump iron'. One of the members at Upton Vale is the head of the PE department at the local Technical Colleges and I have been taking a weight training course! Emotionally and mentally I will be kept fit by my family and I have a magnificent team at Upton Vale who will give me back-up and have made sure that my itinerary has enough rest breaks within it. During the summer I shall take up my usual relaxation pursuits of sailing and watching cricket".

Personally, I am thrilled that we have David as our President for the coming year. I invite you to pray for him, for his family, and for his church in Torquay as he seeks to be an ambassador not only of the Baptist Union, but of Christ whom he serves.

David Slater.

(P.S. David Coffey's Book, "BUILD THAT BRIDGE" is published by Kingsway at the beginning of April, price £4.95. Subtitled 'Conflict and Reconciliation in the Church', it includes chapters on how to handle diversity, church discipline as discipleship, and an open letter to UptonVale on the issue of conflict over worship. A modern paraphrase of Richard Baxter's 'The Cure of Church Divisions', and a series of bible studies for house groups compiled by Derek Tidball are included within the book. Colin Buchanan, Bishop of Aston and Philip Greenslade of the King's Church, Aldershot, write the forewords).

A Plea for Variety in Worship Music



I have been asked to follow up and amplify Keith Hodson's article in the last issue of the newsletter. I believe there are many good points made by Keith in his article.

The function of music is to serve the people, as Keith points out. It is to be a ministry. Too often, however, music has directed both the people and the worship. Indeed if we are not careful it becomes the judge of our

worship. If the music is formal then the worship is described as 'reverent' or 'dignified'; if the music is informal and spontaneous the worship is described as 'spirit-filled'. In both cases music and worship become synonymous. One person sitting on an organ-stool or playing the guitar of another standing in a pulpit can dictate the style and content of music in worship according to their own taste. I recall a statement made by Betty Pulkingham - "if the people in the pew are more important than the music we choose, we will choose the right music." Music indeed must serve the congregation with its varying needs and tastes.

The God we worship is a God of variety - his creation is one example of this. No two snowflakes are alike. Does the nature of our worship reflect the nature of the one we worship? Keith Hodson I believe is in danger of denying this by insisting that, in general, 'low-brow' music should be the norm in our worship. 'Low-brow' (presumably Radio 2 style) music should be used and does appeal to many of our people. There is nothing wrong in that. However, there are those in our congregations who do listen to Radio 3 and should not they expect to have something which ministers to their taste within the worship?

There are examples of 'useless' music in both high-brow' and 'low-brow' styles and discerning musicians should know which pieces serve their congregations best. I believe Keith is as short-sighted in his conclusion as is the one who believes only formal music should be used in worship. Unfortunately, there has been a polarisation in some churches over styles of music - a division between choir and music group. Paul, in Colossians 3, urges the church to "let the word of Christ dwell richly in you" - to be kind, patient, tolerant, forgiving as "you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs". What a witness to our unity in the Lord if there is one group open to singing both informal and formal music!

I believe there is a need to offer variety in our informal and formal repertoire. We need to thank God for the material reflected in the Songs of Fellowship books. However, let us not stop with these. There is a danger that we will be very monochrome in our informal songs. Be on the look out for the new 'Sound of Living Waters' book due out soon and also 'Spirit of Praise Book 2'. Delve through the McCrimmon publications and music from Clifton Cathedral. Try more response songs - for example those found in 'Psalms for Today' and 'Carols for Today' published by Chappells. It may be we need to use some informal songs of a previous generation in order to get a wider balance of teaching in our informal repertoire.

Informal songs are valuable for meditating on one or two thoughts, whereas hymns provide an opportunity of exploring a topic in depth. Let us have both complementing each other. There is a need to broaden our choice of hymns. There have been many new hymns written in the last fifteen years. I do not believe the Spirit only inspires informal songwriters! Look seriously at some of the new hymnbooks, such as 'Hymns for Today's Church'. It often seems incongruous to me that churches who pray, read and sing informal songs using 'you' language revert to 'thee' and 'thou' and obscure terminology in hymn singing! Many of the 'traditional' hymns we sing were revised years ago into their present form. Use the facilities of a copyright licence and print out contemporary and revised hymns for worship.

In order to reflect variety in our worship I would recommend a music team which would reflect the differing tastes and approaches to music within the congregation. Hymn and song choosing should be done by a team of ministers and musicians so that there is a breadth in the repertoire. For Family services involve representatives from the Sunday School and youth group. If the planning is done well in advance - it can be done! - it will give time for the musicians to prepare and introduce new material to the congregation suitable for the theme of the service in which it is intended

to be used. So often musicians could be served better by the leadership. Things are sometimes left to the last minute and the result is not necessarily glorifying to God. I would encourage the minister or leader to go occasionally to the music practices and be on good terms with the musicians. Know what the musicians are capable of achieving.

Standards are important if God is to be glorified. Often in the Old Testament the musician is urged to sing or play with skill (e.g. Psalm 33). When we consider which music is 'best for God' I agree with Keith Hodson that it is not up to some professor of music, organist or music group leader to dictate a stylistic judgment. The best is surely the best we can sing or play the music - whatever the style. That is glorifying the Lord.

It is in this context that training becomes imperative. It is apparent in scripture that teaching goes hand in hand with the use of creative talent - read Exodus 35 where it is the Lord '...who has given to Bezalel and Oholiab the ability to teach others' in the field of artistic craftsmanship. King David was responsible for the formation of a School of Religious Music (1 Chron. 25).

Perhaps a group of churches (across the denominations) could pool their resources and offer training such as organ-accompaniment for pianists, beginners'/next-stage-up/advanced guitar courses; piano accompaniment; drum tuition; orchestral instrumental tuition; vocal skills; sight-singing etc. We have started this in Torquay and I am sure other churches or groups of churches could do the same. Let us train those in our congregation for the present and future music industry instead of waiting for an organist, singer, guitarist, flautist to suddenly 'appear'. Have we something to learn from the Salvation Army and its bands? The training on an area basis would be beneficial to the churches with slender music resources. Look out for music courses advertised. Put on your own workshop and invite some musicians to lead it.

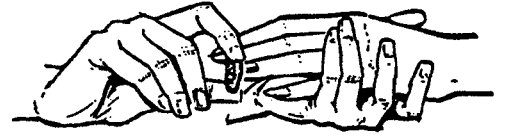
It is encouraging to see the variety of instrumental accompaniment emerging over the last fifteen years. Many orchestral instrumentalists were pew-fodder until they were given the opportunities to minister through the playing of their instruments. At Torbay we house nearly 400 sets of orchestral parts to hymns and songs for Music in Worship Trust. Consider varying the vocal opportunities. As well as a regular choir and/or music group consider a choir or group of singers formed for the main festivals of the year. An informal choir could be formed for occasional services - meeting for tea and practice on a Sunday afternoon and ministering at the evening worship.

Even in a small church there may be opportunities to vary the way we sing hymns and songs. Some verses or sections could be sung by the ladies, others by the men; some verses in unison others in harmony; sections accompanied and others unaccompanied; different harmonisations of the last verse (many found in hymn books or other publications); reading a verse over instrumental accompaniment. Use descants when you know you've got the singers capable of singing them. Change the key within a song or hymn to create climax. If your musicians cannot do this at the moment then get them to learn how to do it and to practice regularly! Encourage the composition of new songs and hymns within your congregation.

This article may have opened up some 'windows' of what can be and what is being done in a number of our churches. Let us aim for variety and let our musicians be given the opportunity to minister!

David Peacock,
Torbay Christian Ministries.

Baptist Marriage Encounter



"You two should go on a Marriage Encounter weekend," urged Jenny.

('Why is she so insistent?' I wondered. "We've got a good marriage, haven't we?")

"We're very busy, while Malcolm is training for the ministry," we said. "Perhaps after finals....."

"All the more reason to go now. If college is busy, the ministry will be worse," Harford joined in.

Malcolm and I rationalized, "We have a good marriage, but we will probably meet some folk with marriage problems in the ministry. Perhaps there are one or two things we could learn."

We went on our Marriage Encounter weekend in October, 1982.

It was an amazing 44 hours! We had then been married for twelve years. During that time one or two "no-go areas" had developed in our relationship. We loved each other, so we avoided subjects which led to cul-de-sacs where I'd say "I feel....." and he'd say "I think...." and neither of us knew where to go next without causing a painful silence. Our Marriage Encounter weekend opened up several topics for discussion that had previously been taboo. We learnt a technique to help us share our feelings with one another. It was like falling in love all over again!

Within a month all we had learnt was severely tested. I suddenly underwent a major surgical operation. This caused great disruption to our family life and to Malcolm's college course. We were beginning to recover when my brother-in-law died from a heart attack. In our shock and sadness we were able to use our new ways of sharing. I have often wondered since how we would have coped without our Marriage Encounter.

Since Malcolm's ordination, keeping our marriage healthy has been a priority. It can become difficult when Malcolm is very busy. We try to spend part of our day off each week talking deeply with each other. We have used some of the insights from Marriage Encounter in various counselling situations.

The purpose of a Marriage Encounter weekend is to teach couples a way of loving, honest, deep communication. There is always room for improvement and strengthening in any marriage. The aim of Marriage Encounter is to make good marriages great ones.

The term "Encounter" comes from the Spanish word Encuentro which means "a new meeting." Marriage Encounter was begun by a Spanish priest working with married couples in 1956. He had helped them prepare before their wedding day, but they asked for help to sustain their marriages. In 1964 Marriage Encounter reached the United States. In Britain the first weekend for Roman Catholics was held in 1972, for Anglicans in 1978 and for Baptists in 1982. Each weekend is designed within a Christian framework, with special adaptations for different denominations. It is not doctrinal or evangelistic, and would not offend a sympathetic non-Christian.

Marriage Encounter is for you and your marriage partner, and for any married couple you know. All that is needed is a couple who love each other and want their relationship to be the best it can be. It is not designed for marriages in serious trouble, although some couples in difficulty have been greatly helped by it.

The weekends last from Friday evening until late Sunday afternoon. Away from family, friends, work, the telephone and other distractions, couples have the opportunity to give their relationship their full attention. About a dozen couples gather at the hotel or centre, and meet the team of two or three baptist couples and a Baptist minister and his wife. This team has been trained to give a series of talks to the whole group, but they are not marriage guidance counsellors.

The team couples share from their own experience so that attention is focused in turn on "I", "We", "We and God" and "We, God and the world". After each talk, a question is put and the couples spend some time apart writing a response. Next, time is given for each couple, together in their own room, to reflect on what they have written. In this way the weekend teaches and gives opportunity to practise a method of communicating called "dialogue" which couples are encouraged to continue after they go home.

If you would like to register for a weekend, or if you have questions, do contact:

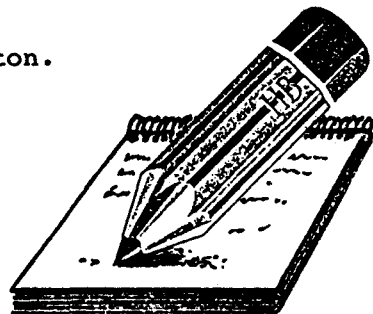
Harford & Jenny Smith, 27 Pigeon House Lane, Freeland, Oxon. OX7 2AG.

When booking, a registration fee of £5 per couple is paid. On the weekend, costs are explained. The team are voluntary, and Baptist Marriage Encounter is organised by the team couples from their own homes. The weekend will already have been paid for by donations from couples on previous weekends. Couples will have the opportunity to make an anonymous donation towards a weekend for another couple. No married couple needs to miss going on a Marriage Encounter because they think they can't afford it.

Footnote for those at the Mainstream Conference in January 1986: Richard and Carolyn Foster have been on a Marriage Encounter weekend and recommend it!

Trisha Dale, Charlton.

Secretary's Scratchpad



You have kindly drawn my attention to a couple of interesting things during the past three months or so. The first, since this was the order in which I received them, concerns the organisation 'ADMINISTRY'. If Nick Mercer is on the Council of Management, then it has got to be worth something! No, but seriously, the aims of the organisation are to serve the whole Church in all denominations, to base its work on what the Bible teaches and to demonstrate that good administration is creative, important and fun!

Since helpers and administrators are described in the Bible as "gifts of the Spirit" administry aims to encourage your Church to understand and use these gifts as a means to effective service for Jesus Christ.

Basically, they offer three types of service. The first is a training course entitled "Education and Training Ministry" and is for all administrative office holders, Ministers and Students. The second is called "Church Administrator Resource Centre" which is designed to help those who are Administrators become more effective in their job and help the Church set up its own resource centre for helping others. Then there is the Inter-Church Organisation Project, designed to bring all participating Churches into contact with each other so that good ideas and experiences can be shared more widely.

If you are interested then send off for a brochure and the accompanying leaflets to: ADMINISTRY, 28 Fontmell Close, St. Albans, Herts. AL3 5HU. Tel: (0727) 56370.

The second thing I would like to share with you is about "LIVE WYRE WEEK". Alan Pain of Sutton Coldfield is a prime mover in setting up a "new holiday Bible week" for everyone. In the wake of John Wimber and his team coming to Britain, the week aims to give families and Church groups an opportunity to grow together in this dimension of power, life and unity. It is not directly designed as a rival to other Bible weeks, just an alternative.

Speakers include, Frank Cooke, Bob Allen, Dr. Patrick McElligott, Alan Pain and his brother Tim and Rick Williams. With a varied programme and reasonable costs for caravaners and campers, you should find it all very worthwhile. If you want a brochure, which includes a booking form, write to: The Booking Secretary, Live Wyre Week, 68 Somerville Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands. B73 6HJ. Tel: (021) 355 1292.

Dates 2nd - 9th August 1986 at Cleobury Place, Shropshire.

With best wishes to you all,
David Slater.

Reviews



RESTORING THE KINGDOM

The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement
by Dr. Andrew Walker - Hodder and Stoughton, £5.95

In writing this book Dr. Walker is self confessedly attempting the impossible task of charting and evaluating a movement which is still very much in a state of flux. For this very reason his book has not received a rapturous welcome from the very 'house-church' movement (better described, says Walker, as 'Restorationism') of which he writes. Already by the time of publication the book was out of date, events had moved on and the scene had changed. Dr. Walker may want to come back in ten years time to have another stab at his task, but I for one am glad that this book has seen the light of day.

I confess that I read the book (apart from the sociological bits) with a compulsiveness I usually reserve for Le Carre. This owes something to the fascination and interest of the subject, something more to the attraction of the author himself (with his unusual mix of Pentecostal background, sociotheological insight, charismatic sympathy and Russian Orthodox perspective) and most of all to the fact that here are events, personalities and movements described with which I, and many others, have been involved in a living inter-action and dialogue for some years. To have outlined the general history of the movement from the early seventies along with kind but insightful mini-portraits of the main actors in the drama, was for me to make sense of a kaleidoscope of bits of information that I have been fathering over the years and am now better able to see whole.

What does Walker's book reveal to us? First of all it presents us with a movement of immense vitality and vigour which is here to stay and yet

which is still in the process of finding itself. For both these reasons, because of what we may gain from it in its vitality and contribute to it in its discovery, it behoves us to befriend it and not isolate it. With some wings of the movement (those who are 'divergent' thinkers, to employ one insight from the book) this can easily be done, with others (the 'convergent' thinkers) it will be more difficult. Be done it must, for the good of the whole church.

Secondly, we are shown a movement which, even with its great vigour, is not as different from the rest of the church as it would like to think. 'Kingdom' principles may well be at the heart of restoration, but personalities there are also in abundance and the interaction between those personalities has issued in the complicated matrix which is current restorationism. 'Covenant relationship', proclaimed at the beginning as the instrument of a whole new form of church life, has apparently proved difficult to maintain. Perhaps a more modest aspiration (such as that of 'association') would have proved more workable. This is not to carp, but simply to recognise their and our solidarity in human weakness.

Thirdly, we are presented with a movement which has sought to experiment with discipling and shepherding structures both within the local church and beyond it in the form of apostolic ministries. Here there is a connection with the belief that Kingdom ways are being restored and that the current move is the end-time manifestation of the Kingdom of God so long awaited. Walker caricatures the ethos of the movement as 'patriarchal'. It is at this crucial point that some of us, in times past, who have not wanted to be caught up in patriarchal, hierarchial or 'chain of command' type structures have parted company with 'Restoration' and been thrust back upon our basic (baptist?) instincts. Walker is unable (from his Russian Orthodoxy) to offer a critique of these tendencies in the movement from the perspective of the 'gathered church', but we are able and should be so doing. The challenge here is to articulate alternative forms through which the nature of the church as a discipling community can be expressed without falling into the dangers of a freedom-robbing authoritarianism.

In his sociological analysis Walker seeks to find forerunners to Restorationism in Irving's Catholic Apostolic Church of the nineteenth century and the several Pentecostal movements of the twentieth and to draw appropriate analogies. Restorationists will no doubt resent the implication that they are just another movement in religious history but must inevitably agree that they face precisely the same dangers of institutionalisation and atrophy as anybody else. However, interesting though the analogies may be, I wonder whether Walker gives adequate emphasis to the fact that before it becomes a sociological event, sectarianism is a matter of the spirit and of the heart. The distinction between R1 (the stricter stream of restorationists) and R2 (who are more open) drawn by Walker revolves around this attitude. While those in R1 continue to exhibit narrowness of attitude in refusing to embrace the whole church, their claim not to be another denomination will sound as hollow as it has ever done.

Walker succeeds in salting his work with provocative insights. I am still pondering in a spirit of self examination his comments on the role of music in Pentecostalism, Renewal and Restoration. What, he wonders, would be the appeal of these movements if there were no music? I continue to reflect upon his judgment that churches of this type unconsciously foster a fear of the world which stifles involvement in it. I find myself understanding completely his need to escape from the tension of frenetic activity, goal-achievement and intense emotion back into the stillness and serenity of the Orthodox liturgy. The reported comment of George Tarleton (one-time apostle and now withdrawn from the fray) that it is about time we stopped trying to evangelise the world and started loving it, continues to echo in my mind.

Finally, Walker in his last paragraph is able to touch upon the element of dual motivation I have often noticed in myself and others: "Coming home from Bradford I reflected on how I saw the Kingdom in a less literalist and monolithic way than Bryn. I could not see how the gospels point towards an earthly millenium, or a massive corporation or a giant assembly of the saints. Subjectively after months of 'heap offerings', video messages of 'God's men of the hour', excitement and praising, I wondered what all this had to do with the Kingdom. Was Restorationism a sect standing against the forces of modernism or empire building by a small group of men? The answer I realised was that it was probably both."

MONEY, SEX AND POWER

by Richard J. Foster - Hodder and Stoughton - £3.95

Having read Celebration of Discipline, the author's first book, and having heard him as a conference speaker, I was glad to be asked to review this book because it gave me the excuse I needed to spend time reading this new contribution. It is an exciting book which is worth not only reading, but integrating into the pastoral strategy of a congregation!

Why should an author like Foster, who has helped us so much on spiritual disciplines, pick these issues as the topics for his latest book? It is, as he says, because throughout history spiritual revivals have been accompanied by a clear and bold response to these very issues. Foster knows the devotional classics of the past and sees that in each period of renewal such a response is a common thread. That he not only sees it is necessary today, but has taken on the challenge to begin it, makes this book, in a real sense, prophetic.

The response of the church through the centuries has been in terms of the language of covenant - to make vows. Monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience have been renewed in another century by vows of industry, faithfulness and order. Foster suggests that the church of today can issue a new call with clear vows as a sign of the kingdom of God in the midst of the world. I, for one, would welcome just such a response.

The organisation of the book is a matter of well-crafted simplicity: an introductory chapter, four chapters on each of the three topics, and a conclusion. Even the helpful division of notes and bibliography - where the actual footnotes are at the back, but the comments which are necessary to reading are at the bottom of the page - add to the ease and pleasure of reading this book.

With regard to the topic of money, Foster discerns from the Scriptures both a darker side and a lighter side to the issue. He insists that we look at the darker side well before we move on to the lighter side. One of the most significant points he makes, to my mind, is the spiritual character which Jesus gives to wealth. It is not something which is morally neutral - which can be used either for good or evil. It is something which has spiritual power which seeks to dominate us. He says it is the spiritual power behind money that we seek to deny today - and that to our peril. He goes on to make some practical suggestions about the mastering of this potential "god" and bringing it under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, Foster points to what he sees as a vow, that of simplicity, as the modern-day Christian response.

On the issue of sex, the historic church comes under some intense (and in my view altogether appropriate) criticism. Foster feels that in an effort to avoid the sins of lust and sexual perversion, the church has thrown out the "baby" with the "bath water". What has suffered has been the joyful and

pure passion of sex within the bond of faithfulness. Women within the community of faith have been maligned and oppressed in the name of God's divine order. Foster sees this as the result of the fall ("your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you" Gen. 3:16). Also included in this section is a very helpful discussion on "Homosexuality and the Christian". A very frank and honest chapter on "Sexuality and Singleness" precedes a chapter on marriage. There is much spiritual "meat" in this section for small groups to pick up and discuss together. Foster points toward fidelity as the vow of the day and suggests that it is rooted in the very nature of God's agape, covenant-making love.

The section on power was, for me, the most challenging. To start with, Foster identifies it as the "original" sin of Adam and Eve in the garden. Throughout the book Foster points to the spiritual realities behind the sins. But here he grabs hold of something exciting and terrifying. His discussion of "principalities and powers" is a successful attempt at putting a theological topic into language which the average Christian can not only understand but also make use of. It is something, I predict, the Church will benefit from for years to come. While calling the individual to become aware of the demonic influence of power in their own lives, he does not stop there. He calls on the church to begin to discern the demonic powers which are at work in the society in which we live and to confront them with all the spiritual resources at our disposal. Finally, he contrasts the evil use of power with the creative healing power which comes from God. He calls us to a humble use of power for the good of the church and the world. The vow he points to is service.

Seldom have I been challenged by a book like I have this one. It challenges me at the same time to go to my "prayer closet" to be alone with the Lord and to take on the task of pastoring with a new excitement and faith. I commend it to all of the Mainstream readers.

Walfred Fahrner,
London Mennonite Centre.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Bible Translations and how to choose between them: Alan Duthie, Paternoster, £3.50, 127pp. Tells us what we knew already. Comprehensive and objective survey. Results - order of difficulty KJV, NEB, LB, NIV, GNB; order of merit GNB, New Jerusalem Bible (RC), New American Bible (RC), NEB, NIV. The NJB and NEB assume high levels of education. The NIV assumes a basic theological knowledge. Looks as though the GNB and NIV are here to stay.

Step Forward into Mission: Bryan Gilbert, One Step Forward Publications. Study booklet (48pp) and leaders manual (40pp). "In the light of Bryan Gilbert's achievements in his One Step Forward materials and ministry, I am confident that his new work will be valuable and help forward the cause of the gospel." Gavin Reid, National Director of Mission England.

He has spoken through the prophets: Lord Coggan. Batten Lecture 1985. London Baptist Preachers' Association. 12pp. 60p. Other lectures available.

Who's Holding the Umbrella? William Yaeger. (Published by Thomas Nelson). Available from John Tucker, 112 Milton Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland. price £8.95 plus 75p. p + p. The pastor of First Baptist Church, Modesto, California outlines the story behind the remarkable growth of this church. Biblical principles of leadership, evangelism and discipleship training explained. How leaders should care, protect the body, equip the body, and be cared for, etc.

Announcing a Mainstream

EXPOSITORS' WORKSHOP

at Broadmead, Northampton on 30th June - 2nd July

with Alastair Campbell and John Weaver

Cost: £22.50

- WHAT? An opportunity for committed expositors to work together in sharpening one another so that the diamonds of God's word flash with new light in our preaching.
- WHO? We have gained greatly from meeting with Dick Lucas in the two previous Mainstream preaching conferences. This workshop will seek to build on what was gained there, but we have deliberately avoided inviting any 'big name' speaker. Instead we intend to lead it ourselves, and we hope there will be brothers and sisters willing to back this venture of faith and share with us their insights.
- HOW? The set text for the workshop is John chapters 13-17, and all participants are asked to study these chapters before coming. The workshop will include lectures, group work, private study and the sharing of outline sermons prepared in the workshop. Everyone should come away from this with something useful to take home!
- WHEN, WHERE, & HOW MUCH? The workshop begins with lunch at Broadmead, Monday 30th June. at 12.30p.m. and ends with lunch on Wednesday. All sessions and main meals will be at Broadmead. Bed and breakfast will be at Hereward Wake House in Northampton. Inclusive charge of £22.50, including a non-returnable deposit of £5. Closing date for bookings 16th June. Please enrol by sending the tear-off slip and your deposit to:

Alastair Campbell, 34 Park Avenue North, Northampton, NN3 2JE.
or
John Weaver, The Manse, Highfield Road, Rushden, Northants. NN10 9QD.



EXPOSITORS WORKSHOP

ENROLMENT FORM

Name:

Address:

.....

Tel: Church:

I wish to enrol in the Expositors Workshop at Broadmead, Northampton from 30th June - 2nd July and enclose a deposit of £5.

Signed:

MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE 1987

The 1987 Mainstream Conference will be held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire from Monday, 12th to Wednesday 14th January. Details of programme and speakers will be announced later, but the conference theme will be, "The Living Church in a Broken World". The cost will be £30 and a £5 non- returnable deposit will book a place.

Booking Form:

Please reserve places for the Mainstream Conference. I enclose a £5.00 non-returnable deposit for each place booked.

Name:

Address:

.....

Telephone No.:

Church:

Send to: Revd. Jack Ramsbottom, 2 Lovelace Drive, Kidlington
Oxford, OX5 2LY.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR STUDENTS: Starting with this issue we are introducing a special subscription rate for Students of £2.00 per year instead of the usual £3.00.



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